"SOCIO - ECONOMIC STATUS AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION AS DETERMINANTS OF THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF SCHOOL: A PERCEPTUAL STUDY OF PARENTS"

A synopsis of Ph.D Dissertation

Submitted to JK Lakshmipat University, Jaipur

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INTRODUCTION:

A. Conceptual Framework :

Education is now widely valued not only for its intrinsic value in enriching the lives of individuals but also for its functional value in the development of the human capital of a nation. Educational investments in children have been shown to have high private and social returns. The private returns are associated with increased productivity and earnings in adulthood, and with further non-pecuniary gains arising from the greater efficiency with which educated individuals are able to acquire and process information (Rosenzweig 1995).

Anyone with school age children worries about getting the best school for his/her child. Even so, the processes by which school choices are made, or indeed whether one gets an opportunity to choose, are complex.

Many parents are in dilemma when it comes to choosing a school for their children. Parents need to consider many factors and determine their priorities (Robbins and Coulter, 2005). Parents have different educational beliefs and perceptions which influence the choice of school for their children. There are also constraints that may force the parent to choose a school that is less preferred, because of availability and affordability. Some parents could be persuaded by promising claims made by marketing propaganda, such as advertisements and brand names. If the various factors could be identified, it would be helpful for parents to decide on a good school for their children.

A school is an institution , where students come to receive education under the guidance of teacher. Most countries have systems of formal education, which is commonly compulsory. It helps them to enhance their skills and talent. It makes them responsible citizens. As children grow, their needs change, and perhaps their school should, too.

School plays a significant role in shaping the career of a student. In India, the information about the schools is very scattered and unorganized, so parents find it very difficult to select an appropriate school for their ward. Parents demand rigorous education to increase their children's chances of getting into a good college.

Parents must do their homework. First, they should know their child and understand his or her developmental needs. Second, find the school that best matches their child's needs, and should consider how much they can afford to pay. Teri Solochek believes that to identify their child's needs, they should ask how much pressure their child can take, and what is his or her motivational level and potential achievement.

Parents should think about their child's learning style. They should choose a school that adds to the child's strength as reported by Jacqueline Y. Peizer. Another factor in choosing private school is to look for a match with one's family values. Some parents may want a school with a strong religious and moral influence.

Parents want to know, how to distinguish a good school from an ordinary one. No well defined parameters are there to choose a good school. Different agencies, however, conduct the school evaluations in different ways. The audit requirement for CBSE schools covers the issues, such as land and building, the constitution of managing committees, staff and service conditions, qualifications and experience, classrooms, playgrounds, utilities, libraries, laboratories, prospective plans, fees structure, teacher student ratio and the like (CBSE *Affiliation and Inspection Report, 2011*). The drawbacks are that it is overly bureaucratic, fails to involve stakeholders and neglects parents' satisfaction.

The IIM Instrument for the 360 Degree Appraisal of Schools consists of feedback questionnaires to be completed by parents, teachers and students concerning a wide spectrum of issues regarding principals, teachers and students (Varshneya, 2011). It neglects the results in ICSE, CBSE and

State Board examinations. Outlook Magazine (2001) had commissioned a survey of schools on different parameters but failed to address all the needs of stakeholders and parents.

B. REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

Many issues have to be taken into considerations by parents while choosing a school for their children. It involves between planning of getting all the benefits and achievement for their children's future and the total cost they must pay. Parents as managers of the family are responsible for the family organization's success or failure (Robbins and Coulter, 2005).

With changing consumer patterns, traditional school managements are losing their markets to modern early childhood education franchises that are branded and have imported curricula. Studying the parents' choice of schools and why they choose them would enable school management to understand and cater to the parents' needs and preferences. Schools with marketing strategies that seek to provide more value than the competitors need to study parents' choice, their needs and desires in order to ensure loyalty. According to Hawkins et al (2007), satisfied customers are profitable in the long run, which is why it is very important for schools to meet the needs of both parents and children. Many prior researches focus on the institutional and performance aspects of schools, such as teaching strategies, nutrition and child psychology, behavior of parents and children. (Dahari, 2011)

Most of the research studies on schools have focused on relationship between school education quality and child outcomes. How schooling decisions are made within households, since it is the primary concern affecting educational access? While the heterogeneity of private schooling in India has been noted (Aggarwal, 2000; De et al., 2002; Majumdar and Vaidyanathan, 1995; Tilak and Sudarshan, 2001; Tooley and Dixon, 2005), there is dearth of research on the household schooling behaviors (Balagopalan, 2004).

The children are divided into "family" groups, from kindergarten through eighth grade. For instance, one of the values taught is preventing violence. The children work on the ways to avoid violence by communicating well, and being honest and respectful. A counselor visits each class weekly, where they work on intervention, mediation and conflict resolution skills. The school also encourages self esteem by displaying multiethnic icons and images. The children do not look at the icons of other ethnicity.

All parents need to make a major decision when their children reach three years of age as now is the time to choose their child's first formal educational experience. Parents' decision processes consist of evaluating children's needs, gather or search for information and evaluate all the available alternatives (McDaniel, 2006).

All parents like to give the best of everything to their children, including pre-schooling. However, there are various factors that may limit a parent's choice while deciding on a pre-school. Identifying these factors will enable parents to make optimal choice and fulfill their needs (Hawkins, et al, 2007).

According to Wolfson (2000), there are six areas that parents should consider while choosing a pre-school for their children, which in no particular order of importance are location, hours of operation, educational philosophy, teacher's quality and styles, facilities and instincts!

The educational philosophy focuses on the following parameters:

- **Curriculum**

a. Emphasis on academic skills
b. Parents' involvement
c. Approach to child independence and individual creativity

d. Program Integration

- **Quality**

a. Qualified Teachers
b. Quality of Teaching.

- Facilities and Infrastructure
- Hygiene and cleanliness
- Availability of Transportation
- Safety and Security
- Class Size
- Nutrition
- Location
- Hours of Operation
- Costs and Affordability
- Parents' Socio-Demographic Background
- Choice of Branded versus Non-Branded Pre-schools
- Choice of Private-run versus Government-run Pre-schools
- Choice of Language Medium
- Choice of Religion-Based Pre-schools

There is a need to contextualize school markets (Waslander and Thrupp, 1997), According to most State and Central Government Regulations, most government schools are not to deny admission to any child who wishes to be enrolled. Therefore, in principle, parents have a choice of which school to access. Secondly, similar to the USA and UK where privileged parents have had the freedom to choose private schooling for their children (Ball, 2003; Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe, 1995; Golhaber, 1999; Power, Edwards, Whitty, and Wigfall, 2003), the same has long existed for the upper middle class and elite in India. However, the use of private schooling by parents from lower middle-class and disadvantaged groups marks the need to examine changing school choice behaviors.

Much of the literature on school choice has been developed in economically advantaged countries (Belfield and Levin, 2005; Fusarelli,

2003; Gewirtz et al., 1995; Power et al., 2003; Waslander and Thrupp, 1997). Apart from studies on voucher programs (Gauri and Vawda, 2004; McEwan and Carnoy, 2000; Mizala and Romaguera, 2000), less relevant to public/private sector school choice in the absence of government programs or private subsidies, literature on school choice in economically developing countries is limited (Alderman et al., 2001; Glewwe and Jacoby , 1994 ; Glick and Sahn, 2006)

Of course, choice is a much more complicated process. Studies in the USA and the UK have examined complications in choice-making arising from issues such as incomplete information (Schneider and Buckley, 2002; Schneider, Teske and Marschall, 2000);

If parents choose schools based on their attributes, then these attributes are endogenous in an educational production function; any positive choice association between school quality and cognitive skills…may simply be due to the fact that more motivated students go to better schools (Glewwe and Jacoby, 1994).

In Alderman et al. (2001) study on public/private schooling choices of low income households in Pakistan, 37 percent of children were enrolled in private schools among families in the lowest income bracket (less than Rs. 2000/month) surveyed in Lahore. Of all children in that income bracket, a slightly higher proportion of girls was enrolled in private schools (37 percent) compared to boys (35 percent). They contend that schooling choices of poor parents are affected by fee level, school proximity, and quality. Similarly, in their study on Madagascar, Glick and Sahn (2006) found that school choice was related to quality and negatively to multi-grade teaching and poor facilities, but there is no analysis on household choice processes. Apple (2004) reminds us that the focus on school choice should be more comprehensive to include "a

systemic quality, a set of values, skills, dispositions, and similar to other studies (Govinda, 2002; Jeffrey and Jeffrey, 2005; PROBE, 1999). The difference between the private sector and the state sector is like that between the ground and the sky (Shrivastava, 2007).

Deficiencies in the state sector were attributed to a number of school-related factors, such as: lack of adequate school facilities; short-staffing of teachers; unsanctioned school closures and irregular school staff attendance; inadequate or infrequent monitoring or school inspections; lack of strict disciplinary procedures for children; unsupportive and non-responsive school environment for parents; and unreliable teachers and unsatisfactory teaching practices. There is converging evidence in existing literature on many of these points (Balagopalan and Subrahamanian, 2003; Jabbi and Rajyalaskshmi. 2000; Nambissan and Sedwal, 2001; PROBE, 1999). There's nothing but deceit and disloyalty in state schools. People sit at home and accumulate their pensions. They don't want to teach. Teachers get their postings transferred locally [from rural schools]. They do their household chores, farming and agriculture or business, they do everything. They have no interest in teaching. So two or four children from the local area go just to hang out, they're not the studying type…what difference does it make? Instead of playing at home, they go and play at school. And in the city, what's the situation in the state schools? The situation is perhaps likely to be the same.

C. Objectives of the Study:

The review of literature on criteria for selection of schools has shown that it has been related to innumerable variables, but it has not been related to either level of education or socio economic levels of parents. Although there have been some studies where socio economic level is considered as one of the important factors. In view of the dearth of literature on the subject, there is a necessity to take up a full fledged work on these aspects. Therefore, present research work is undertaken with the following main objectives:

I. To study the effect of socio economic status of parents on the selection of school.

II. To study the effect of level of education on the selection of school.

III. To study the interactive effect of socio economic status and level of education on the selection of school.

IV. To open new vistas of research.

2. Research Method

A. The Study

The study is limited to Primary, Secondary and Sr. Secondary Schools, the independent variables being socio-economic status and level of education. The dependent variable would be criteria for selection of school.

B. The Design

The study will be based on 3 x 3 Bivariate Factorial Design as given under:

Level of Education

		Primary	Secondary	Senior Secondary
SES (Socio-Economic Status)	**High**	A	B	C
	Medium	D	E	F
	Low	G	H	I

Where the symbols stand for

A → Parents having high S.E.S. seeking admission at primary level

B → Parents having medium S.E.S. seeking admission at primary level

C → Parents having low S.E.S. seeking admission at primary level

D → Parents having high S.E.S. seeking admission at secondary level

E → Parents having medium S.E.S. seeking admission at secondary level

F → Parents having low S.E.S. seeking admission at secondary level

G → Parents having high S.E.S. seeking admission at sr. secondary level

H → Parents having medium S.E.S. seeking admission at sr. secondary level

I → Parents having low S.E.S. seeking admission at sr. secondary level

C. The Sample

The data will be collected from a sample of 270 parents. The distribution of sample is given as below:

Level of Education

↓

		Primary	Secondary	Senior Secondary	
SES (Socio-Economic Status)	**High**	30	30	30	
	Medium	30	30	30	
	Low	30	30	30	
					270

D. The Tools

i) For Data Collection:

Data will be collected by administering Standardized instruments.

ii) For Data Analysis:

Appropriate Statistical tools will be used for analysis, such as

a. ANOVA

b. t - test

c. and others

Possible Outcomes

This study will help the school managements to understand the criteria, factors and features that parents evaluate while choosing the school for their children. The results may reveal indicators for school managements and different education boards as well as auditing bodies. The understanding of parents' choice of schools will help the educational institutions in understanding needs of the parents better and thus improve satisfaction and loyalty. In case of parents, this study may help to evaluate the school features that provide the best facilities and quality and make the process of selecting the school for their children faster and easier.

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